

Message Text

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72

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 DRC-01 /157 W

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P 062004Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1693

INFO AMEMBASSY MADRID

DIA WASH

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 9425

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: PINT VE

SUBJECT: POLICE ARREST LEADING PEREZJIMENISTAS FOR POSSIBLE
CONSPIRACY

SUMMARY: IN WHAT APPEARS TO BE OVERREACTION, POLICE HAVE ORDERED ARRESTS OF ASSORTED PEREZJIMENISTA FIGURES FOR CALLING UPCOMING ELECTIONS FRAUDULENT AND DEMANDING CALDERA'S RESIGNATION. ACTION SEEMS TO BE TIED TO RECENT CRACKDOWNS AGAINST SUSPECTED COUP-PLOTTERS AMONG RETIRED MILITARY AND CIVILIAN ASSOCIATES; GOV IS, IN FACT, BECOMING MORE SENSITIVE TO COUP RUMORS AS ELECTION APPROACHES. PEREZJIMENISTAS APPARENTLY ACTED TO LAY GROUNDWORK FOR PJ TO DENOUNCE ELECTIONS AS FRAUD AND DEMAND FOLLOWERS BOYCOTT THEM IN SOME MANNER. END SUMMARY.

1. REACTING TO PEREZJIMENISTA CLAIMS THAT UPCOMING ELECTIONS WILL BE FRAUDULENT, DISIP (SECRET SERVICE IN MINISTRY OF INTERIOR) NOVEMBER 4-5 ORDERED ARREST OF SEVERAL LEADING BACKERS OF EX-DICTATOR. IN ADDITION TO SEVEN MIDDLE AND LOWER ECHELON FIGURES, INCLUDING SHADY COUP-PLOTTER NESTOR MORATINOS
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AND RETIRED ARMY CAPTAIN RUBEN MASSO PERDOMO, POLICE REPORTEDLY

DETAINED PEREZJIMENISTA SENATOR OSCAR HURTADO DIAZ FOR SEVERAL HOURS BEFORE FREEING HIM BECAUSE OF HIS PARLIAMENTARY IMMUNITY. POLICE REPORTEDLY WOULD ALSO HAVE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY CONGRESSIONAL DEPUTY AND SECRETARY GENERAL OF LARGEST PRO-PJ PARTY, PABLO SALAS CASTILLO, HAD HE NOT ALSO ENJOYED IMMUNITY.

2. CHARGE IS THAT THESE PEREZJIMENISTAS CAUSED TO BE PUBLISHED IN MARACAIBO AND MADRID PAPERS TELEGRAM DEMANDING RESIGNATION OF PRESIDENT CALDERA AND ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW GOVERNMENT TO GUARANTEE FRAUD-FREE ELECTION. DISIP HAS TERMED THIS DISRESPECT FOR OFFICE OF PRESIDENT AND POSSIBLE CONSPIRACY TO DISRUPT ELECTIONS. ANTI-PEREZJIMENISTA ACTION SEEMS TO BE RELATED TO RECENT ARMED FORCES INVESTIGATIONS OF ALLEGED INCITEMENT TO REVOLT BY GROUP OF RETIRED MILITARY, INCLUDING FORMER NAVY LT COMMANDER FELIPE SANTIAGO TESTAMARK, AND UNNAMED CIVILIANS. COURTS ARE ALSO INVESTIGATING STATEMENTS BY FORMER DEFENSE MINISTER MARTIN GARCIA VILLASMIL WHO, GOV ALLEGES, SUPPORTS A COUP.

3. COMMENT: AS NOTED MOST RECENTLY IN CARACAS 9184 (NOTAL) RUMORS OF POSSIBLE COUPS, AND STRONG GOVERNMENT COUNTER-ACTION, ARE TO BE EXPECTED AT THIS POINT IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN. GARCIA VILLASMIL AND POSSIBLE CONSPIRACY OF RETIRED MILITARY HAVE BEEN PRIME TARGETS OF GOVERNMENT ANTI-COUP INVESTIGATIONS FOR SOME TIME. HOWEVER, CRACKDOWN ON PRO-PJ FORCES, WHO ARE PRESENTLY IN SHAMBLES BECAUSE THEIR LEADER REFUSES TO BACK ANY CANDIDATE, IS MORE PUZZLING, AS WAS THEIR PUBLICATION OF TELEGRAM IN FIRST PLACE.

4. BEST EXPLANATION OF LATTER EVENT IS PROBABLY THAT THEY ARE BOLSTERING A FUTURE CLAIM BY PEREZ JIMENEZ THAT HE WILL NOT SUPPORT ANY CANDIDATE BECAUSE OF AN ALLEGEDLY FRAUDULENT ELECTION, THUS LAYING GROUNDWORK FOR CALLING SUPPORTERS TO CAST NULL VOTE (WHICH IS LEGAL) OR ABSTAIN FROM VOTING (WHICH IS ILLEGAL). ARRESTS INDICATE GOVERNMENT DECIDED (A) THAT PRO-PJ ACTIVITIES WERE UNNECESSARILY DISRUPTIVE AND, (B) THAT PEREZJIMENISTAS ARE TOO FRAGMENTED TO MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE TO GOVERNMENT PARTY COPEI IN THE VOTING. ACTION WAS, THEREFORE, WARNING AGAINST DENIGRATING ELECTORAL PROCESS.

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EVEN SO, WHOLE DUST-UP LOOKS LIKE OVERREACTION.
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